Frequently Asked Questions U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Recreational Shooting Area Closure

Q. What are the specific locations that will be closed?

- **A.** The closure area is located in the Aguanga Valley, south Highway 79:
- BLM (Township 9 South, Range 1 East, Section 2,11,12 SBBM) Aguanga Valley/High Point Road;
- U.S. Forest Service will close a three mile section (½ mile on both sides of the road) of the High Point Road (8S05) and Oak Grove Road (9S09) up to the junction of Palomar Divide Road (9S07) (Township 9 South, Range 1 East within portions of sections 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 24, and 25 SBBM).

A map of the closure is available on the Cleveland National Forest web site at www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland and at the BLM web site at www.ca.blm.gov/palmsprings/. In addition, maps will be distributed at local U.S. Forest Service and BLM offices.

Q. Why is the area being closed?

A. The area is being closed because of public safety concerns from recreational shooting. There is a danger to the public from bullets that can travel upwards of two miles or more into the surrounding communities.

Due to development of private homes around the shooting area, the shooting area is no longer a safe distance away. Bullets are traveling in all directions for upwards of two miles or more. As a result, private homes and property in surrounding communities have been hit with stray and ricocheting bullets. In addition, Highway 79 corridor lies within the bullet trajectory area from the shooting locations.

Q. If the area is so unsafe, why haven't you closed it before now?

A. There have recently been more housing developments built in the communities close to the shooting area along the Highway 79 corridor. The number of recreational shooters has dramatically increased making it unsafe. In addition, there has been a dramatic increase in recreational shooters traveling from as far away as Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, and San Bernardino Counties. These factors coupled with increased traffic on Highway 79 contribute to making the shooting area unsafe.

Q. How did the shooting area become an issue?

A. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been notified by concerned residents whose property and homes have been hit with stray and ricocheting bullets.

Q Why can't a change in shooting direction resolve the safety problems?

A. A 360 (degree) safe zone for shooting does not exist in the area.

Q. Can you do anything to make the area safe for shooting?

A. The BLM and U.S. Forest Service have reviewed the area and have determined that this location is no longer a safe area for this type of recreational shooting because of the area's proximity to residential development, lack of natural backstops, and insufficient buffer zones.

Q. Will this area be reopened at any time?

A. The area will remain closed under these emergency closure orders until further analysis is conducted by each agency. The BLM will engage the public during the permanent closure process. The U.S. Forest Service will conduct site specific environmental analysis as required before a final decision is made. The U.S. Forest Service analysis will be guided by the revised Forest Plan. The Draft plans are scheduled for release in May 2004.

Q. Are there any other locations that we can go to shoot?

A. For information on shooting areas on BLM public lands contact the California Desert District Office at (909) 697-5200. The Orosco Ridge shooting area on the Cleveland National Forest is scheduled to be reopened. For more information on the site, contact the Palomar Ranger District at (760) 788-0250.

Palomar Divide Road Area from the beginning of the forest boundary on Palomar Divide Road (9S07) - which is located near mile marker 42 on Highway 79 - up to the junction of Oak Grove Road (9S09) and Palomar Divide Road (9S07) (in Section 25, Township 9 South, Range 1East near High Point lookout) remains open to recreational shooting. The Forest will monitor the use in this area.

Q. Will this closure affect hunting on the National Forest or Bureau of Land Management lands?

A. No. Hunting is allowed on National Forest system lands as well as BLM lands under current Department of Fish and Game guidelines. For additional information on hunting contact your local Department of Fish and Game Office. Also, contact the local district office of BLM or U.S. Forest Service offices for possible restrictions during hunting seasons.

Q. Is the area going to be closed to all entry? What will be allowed in the closed area?

A. No, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, driving on existing roads and other recreational activities are still allowed in the area. The closure only affects recreational target shooting.

Q. Would the U.S. Forest Service or the BLM consider building a shooting range in any other location?

A. Currently there are alternative sites on public and private lands for users. Both agencies will monitor the use at other sites on BLM and National Forest system land in the area and determine, in the future, if additional shooting locations are warranted and available.

Q. Are you considering concessionaire operated shooting locations?

A. Both agencies are open to potential concession operated shooting range alternatives in appropriate locations.

Q. How will the public be notified of the closure?

A. The areas will be posted with closure signs. The Cleveland National Forest web site www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland and the BLM web site www.ca.blm.gov/palmsprings/ will have closure information and maps posted on the site. BLM and U.S. Forest Service Offices will provide information on the closed area. A Public Notice on the closure will be posted in local newspapers. Media outlets will be notified.

Q. What is the penalty if I shoot in this area after it is closed down?

A. Violations of these regulations are punishable by: U.S. Forest Service - a fine not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, and imprisonment not more than 6 months; Bureau of Land Management - a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and/or imprisonment not to exceed 12 months.

Q. Is it going to be patrolled after you have closed it down?

A. Yes, by both U.S. Forest Service and BLM Law Enforcement Officers.